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THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS

Reese Proctor, left, is in Grade 1 and his brother Raiden Proctor will attend Erin Woods School for kindergarten next year. HELEN PIKE/METRO

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Some Erin Woods students excluded from holiday concert

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

A group of Calgary parents are crying Grinch after their children were excluded from performing the song and dance of holiday cheer this year.

In a decision from the Calgary Board of Education and principal of Erin Woods School, major changes were made to the annual winter concert — and according to parents, notice of the change wasn't communicated.

Instead of the tradition families in the area remember growing up, where students gather to sing and celebrate for parents and family to watch, only a fraction of the school took to the stage this year.

Brandi Proctor has a son in Grade 1 — one of the only groups not participating in this year's holiday performance. She's grown up in the neighbourhood and watched friends and family gather for annual concerts. And she was looking forward to seeing her own angel, wise man or shooting star take to the stage.

"My nieces, my nephews … we've been going to those Christmas concerts at that school for years. I've been telling him, don't worry, your turn is next, and then they just go and cancel it and don't inform us."

Proctor and a group of parents got wind of changes on concert day and immediately addressed concerns with the principal who told them it was a CBE choice, and that the gym couldn't accommodate all parents and families at once.

"The Erin Woods School gymnasium is unable to accommodate all students and parents at one time. The principal has chosen to have a variety of celebrations and concerts throughout the year when selected grades will perform. This will allow the students to participate in an entire performance, rather than once during a longer event," read a statement from the CBE Friday.

Amber Gillard's child was attending Erin Woods School and in first-year kindergarten when she decided to pull him from school after what she calls a lack of respect.

"The school didn't respect the parents and the students enough to consult or even inform them of these decisions, so that's why I don't want my kid attending," Gillard said "We put him into a different school just down the street, he's been there just three days and he's got a Christmas concert on Tuesday he's included in — what does that tell you?"

> **I had to look at my son and tell him: 'You don't get a concert' … He cried, he actually stood there and cried because he wasn't going to get a Christmas concert.**
> Brandi Proctor

MOTION

Parking fee freeze 'endorsed'

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

Parking in Calgary in 2016 may cost you a little less, given council approval.

That's the word from the Calgary Parking Authority board, who gave the news to Mayor Naheed Nenshi over lunch Monday.

Nenshi mentioned the fee freeze while speaking to council about his motion for an economic resiliency fund.

"We learned today that the Calgary Parking Authority is contemplating freezing their fees for 2016," said the Mayor. "I think that council may want to do that."

Coun. Gian-Carlo Carra is a CPA board member and he confirmed the plan.

"The board has endorsed the idea that — given the economic downturn — even in those places where raising rates is possible, we're not going to," said Carra. "But we'll take full advantage of being able to lower our rates over the course of the next year and we'll make that our policy, given the downturn."

Carra made the motion in an Oct. 22 meeting that asked city administration to look for more flexible pricing options.

He said city council approved a dynamic pricing strategy in which oversubscribed lots would see incremental price increases.

Now for 2016, there will be no increases, according to Carra.

Get to know Lolo

Lolo lives in colour

Lolo's dog has 5,000 followers

Lolo wears what works

Lolo is her own DJ

Lolo doesn't skip breakfast

Lolo goes where she wants

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Your essential daily news

Slavery, child labour tied to global shrimp supply chains, including Walmart, Red Lobster. **Business**

Green Line inches closer to start with $1.5B pledge

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Councillors' commitment is 'the best gift' for Calgarians

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

Two financial commitments down and one to go as the Green Line inched toward full funding after Monday's Calgary city council meeting.

Councillors opted to commit $1.56 billion towards the Green Line LRT project — a move advocates are applauding as it doesn't increase taxes for Calgarians.

A motion put forward by Coun. Shane Keating to extend the $52 million in provincial "tax room" from a 10-year commitment to 30 years as a way to help fund the Green Line project was approved in council Monday. Attached to his motion Couns. Gian-Carlo Carra, Evan Woolley, Druh Farrell, Sean Chu, Jim Stevenson, Peter Demong, Diane Colley-Urquhart, Brian Pincott and Mayor Nenshi threw in their support.

> **This is the only thing that we should be doing.**
> Coun. Shane Keating

Jeff Binks, president of LRT on the Green foundation, said this is the best gift councillors could have offered Calgarians.

"We now have an extra one billion dollars in commitment to the largest public transit project that Calgarians have ever seen," said Binks.

So far the Green Line, which is a proposed LRT line from north-central Calgary to the deep southeast, has a pot of $580 million over 10 years from the city, as well as a commitment from the previous federal government of $1.5 billion dollars. With a budget between $4.5 and $5 billion dollars, the city still needs provincial investment as well as a solution to fulfill the city's share of funding.

As it turns out, the provincial funding could make or break Green Line plans. Depending on how much financial support the city can raise, if funding from the province doesn't come through, the federal amount promised could falter.

"The crucial thing is that if we don't commit this $1.5 billion we realize that the federal contribution drops extremely because their commitment is for one third of the project," Keating said. "If the province, which is not a wise move, doesn't come on board we could have the $1.5 billion from the city and depending on the price, we would only get $500 million or $700 million from the feds. It's absolutely ludicrous for us to walk away from $1.5 billion in additional funding."

The Green Line is a proposed LRT line from north-central to the deep southeast. METRO FILE

This investment brings the city's portion up to $1.56 billion dollars — a third of the entire project cost over 30 years.

Although a large number of councillors and the mayor were supportive, some weren't ready to stand behind the 30-year investment.

But Keating noted it's important to keep the conversation about Green Line and funding in the facts.

"When you look at all of the stats, all of the information out there, this is the only thing we should be doing," he said.

EDUCATION

Trips to France cancelled

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

All trips to France have been cancelled or postponed by the Calgary Board of Education, in light of current Canadian and French travel advisories.

Two student trips to France have been cancelled and two have been postponed, affecting 99 students. Trips to other parts of the world, including the U.S., will continue as planned.

"This was a very difficult decision. The CBE values international travel," said Chief Superintendent David Stevenson. "For many students, these trips are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to see the world with their peers. But our top priority is the safety of our students and staff."

A number of school boards in the province have been reviewing whether or not to continue with international trips for students and staff in light of recent global events. The Calgary Catholic School District cancelled all international trips earlier this month.

The CBE said they will review the decision at the beginning of the next school year.

Stevenson said the decision was made after consulting with more than 1,000 parents, students and staff, and almost 500 online responses. Other planned trips will continue, to countries including Italy, Spain, Japan and a possible trip to Vietnam.

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HEALTH SERVICES

Airdrie needs 24-hour care: Mayor

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

It's the first time Airdrie Mayor Peter Brown has seen a health minister visit the city to discuss its deteriorating health services.

Brown said he asked Alberta Health Minister Sarah Hoffman to tour the city's urgent-care centre and discuss the possibility of delivering better health care to the area with a new centre.

Brown has been extremely vocal about the facility's "ineffectiveness" and has been advocating for a new health campus.

The urgent-care facility is currently being renovated to increase the total number of beds to 14, Brown said.

"We're hoping to address 24-hour care and what that might look like," he said. "We want to be more cost-effective and more efficient."

He said many Airdrie residents end up in the Foothills Medical Centre due to the lack of services available at the city's facility.

"We're very appreciative that they're taking the time to come out and get a good understanding of what's happening," he said.

Hoffman said the biggest hurdle to get 24-hour care in Airdrie is money.

"For the province of Alberta, I'd say when you look at the price of oil this week, and even compared to that two months ago, there are even more acute pressures," she said.

"We want to work with Airdrie … and make sure no matter where you live, you have the right care, at the right place and at the right time."

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Mayor Naheed Nenshi succeeded in his proposal to use $30 million in surplus funds to freeze transit and rec costs and create a pool of available money for non-profits. METRO FILE

It is a rainy day: Council

ECONOMY

Councillors agree to set up fund to avoid user fee hikes

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

The mayor's idea to create a one-time economic resiliency fund made it though council on Monday.

Councillors voted in favour of freezing transit fares, parks and rec fees and animal-service fees in 2016.

Non-profits, including community associations, may also tap into the fund.

The $30-million resiliency fund came from a budget surplus and would have otherwise gone into the city's fiscal stability reserve (FSR).

The FSR currently sits at $309 million, after accounting for money that had been earmarked for flood relief. Several councillors wanted that money to go back into the FSR, which is often described as the city's rainy-day fund.

Coun. Ward Sutherland was one of the councillors arguing against the resiliency fund.

"There's lots of needs across the board, and here we are picking particular ones," said Sutherland.

"It's more prudent to hold onto the money and see what sort of emergency it is."

Coun. Ray Jones asked why the city wouldn't use the money to make a one-time cut to taxes.

Mayor Naheed Nenshi said he had looked at that option, and for the average household, it would amount to $3 per month in savings.

After the motion passed, Nenshi said he was pleased with council's decision.

"Today council decided to put money back in people's pockets, back into the economy instead of putting it away in a savings account, which is already pretty healthy," Nenshi said.

He said because January's bus passes have already been printed, an adult user will have to pay $103 for that month.

After that, the price will go down to the 2015 price of $99 per month.

> **There's lots of needs across the board.**
> Coun. Ward Sutherland

$3

The amount an average Calgarian household would save monthly had the $30 million been used to pare back the city's property taxes. METRO

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CRIME

RCMP secures court order to close house suspected of drug activity

Police have used a court order to close a house suspected of being a base for drug activity in central Alberta.

RCMP say they were called to the home on a quiet street in Penhold 24 times in the past eight months after receiving complaints from concerned neighbours.

Last August Mounties raided the house and seized drugs, firearms, cash and stolen property.

Five people were arrested, including the homeowner.

The court order will allow RCMP and Alberta Sheriffs to keep the house closed for 90 days in the hope it will break the pattern of problem behaviour. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Driver arrested following multi-county police chase

A driver is in custody after a chase that took law enforcement from Calgary city limits all the way to Gleichen.

Just before 2 p.m. on Monday, police located a stolen vehicle by 14 Avenue and 23 Street SE. According to the Calgary police, as officers approached the vehicle, the driver took evasive action — ramming into two police cars before fleeing.

A police helicopter took over the pursuit, chasing the car as far as Langdon before handing off the pursuit to the RCMP.

Strathmore RCMP have confirmed the chase ended with the driver of the stolen vehicle crashing near Gleichen, Alta.

Gleichen is roughly 100 kilometres southeast of Calgary. METRO

Albertans are growing to prefer pharmacies over public health clinics when choosing a vaccination site. METRO FILE

Flu shots at Alberta pharmacies rising

HEALTH

Increase in demand due to accessibility: Government

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Albertans prefer their local pharmacies when it comes to getting their flu shot.

According to data from Alberta Health, 413,969 Albertans have received their dose of the flu vaccine from pharmacies from Oct. 20 to Dec. 5. Comparatively, 356,225 Albertans ventured into a public health clinic for inoculation against the virus.

And that trend seems to be shifting steadily, where fewer are going to clinics and more are visiting pharmacies.

In 2010/11, 528,753 Albertans got their flu shots from a public clinic. That same fiscal year, only 45,353 received the vaccine from a pharmacy. But in 2014/15 485,669 got their flu shot from a pharmacy, while 496,220 got theirs from a public clinic.

The reason? Supply is more available than before, more pharmacists are trained and, well, people like their pharmacists, according pharmacist Jimy Mathews, president of the Alberta Pharmacists Association.

"When people go get their flu shot, most customers actually know who their pharmacist is," Mathews said. "They have a relationship, and they're just more comfortable with getting the flu shot from someone they know and trust."

485,669

In 2010, 45,353 Albertans got their flu shots from a pharmacy. That total spiked dramatically in 2014, as 485,669 citizens were vaccinated.

He said a new agreement with AHS has also allowed pharmacies to have their own warehouses. Prior to that, pharmacies would have to wait on supplies from the AHS depot, he said.

On top of that, almost all pharmacists are trained to give the flu shot, he added.

"I don't know of a single pharmacist who doesn't have their training," he said. "Back in 2010, when we were first allowed to inject, it was almost a novelty for pharmacists to have training."

There are 1,000 pharmacies in Alberta that offer the flu vaccine, the government said. In comparison, there's 200 public health centres that offer the shot.

Mathews said the increased demand for pharmacists hasn't hampered workers, though it does get hectic during flu season.

"Hopefully we'll see more and more patients over the next few years," he said.

CITY HALL

Policy for naming assets to tighten

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

The city is nailing down its regulations on how it goes about choosing names for municipal assets — including corporate sponsorships.

There is currently a mishmash of three policies that cover various assets, including roads, parks, buildings and communities.

Council previously directed administration to consolidate those into one policy, and the results are now going before the Priority and Finance Committee.

According to documents going before the committee, the city will disband its Municipal Naming Committee and responsibility will now fall to the stewards of the assets. Council will have the final say on most names.

The policy will allow for living people to have assets named after them, as long as they are retired from their field. Politicians from any level of government, including the senate, are eligible too.

Names of individuals who have displayed exemplary public or community service might also find their name on a building.

The proposed regulations allow for regional athletic facilities to have sponsored naming rights, if the management at that facility wanted to develop a sponsorship and naming rights package.

When it comes to sponsorships, the regulations say there must be "demonstrated public support" for the renaming. The city must advertise they are offering to sell naming rights for a two-month period.

Coun. Sean Chu said he thinks sponsorship agreements are a great idea: "It's thinking outside the box and using private businesses to make it more affordable. I think it's awesome."

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Novelist shares dreams

THE PIANO TEACHER

First book delves into hopes author never achieved

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

It was a seven-year-old girl who inspired Eugene Stickland's first novel.

The girl — whose mom was suffering from cancer — was being taught piano by him. He said he just couldn't say no.

It was the first time in 35 years he taught the instrument to someone, ever since he realized his dreams of becoming a star pianist wouldn't work out.

"When she asked me to teach her daughter … I thought, 'Well I have an interesting situation,'" said Stickland, who later went on to become a playwright after his time at music school.

"I have a daughter who's grown up and moved away but, to suddenly have a seven-year-old girl in my apartment, it kind of threw me off a bit. I had to clean up every Saturday."

But it's that exact scenario he uses to kick things off in his book, The Piano Teacher.

This time, however, the piano teacher is filthy rich and has made a fabulous living out of music — unlike Stickland, he admitted. "I gave him everything I wish I had," he said. "He's wealthy beyond any measure."

The Piano Teacher can be purchased at Shelf Life Books, Owl's Nest or Pages. It's also at the Calgary Public Library.

Eugene Stickland's first novel reveals aspects of his personal life, though you might have a hard time pinpointing them. JEREMY SIMES/FOR METRO

NAUGHTY OR NICE LIST

Watchdog names fiscal wins, losses

It's that time of year when Santa Claus makes final changes to his list of naughty and nice — and he's once again got help from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

The fiscal watchdog put out its annual guide to those who deserve a lump of coal in their stocking for being fiscally naughty and others whose sound decisions landed them on the nice list.

Topping the nice list this year are Wildrose leader Brian Jean, NDP minister Kathleen Ganley, NDP MLA Rod Loyola and NDP MLA Jon Carson for having no expenses "at a time when unemployment is soaring, government spending is bloated and harmful tax hikes are being layered on," the CTF said in a release.

City of Calgary manager Jeff Fieldling got the nod for cancelling Christmas … parties. Fielding cancelled the taxpayer-funded holiday open house for civil servants, politicians and families.

Rounding out the nice list's top five are: The province's expansion of the Sunshine List, Edmonton city auditor David Wiun for finding the mismanagement of Edmonton's Metro LRT line and the $100,000 in "wasted taxpayer money," and Alberta Education Minister Sarah Hoffman for blowing the whistle on the ASBA (see naughty list below).

Now for the naughty list.

Leading the way are Premier Rachel Notley and Environment Minister Shannon Phillips, who "earned themselves an extra ironic lump of coal for imposing a tax on everything that moves," said the CTF, despite the fact, it says, that the tax won't have any effect on climate change.

Next up is Notley's right-hand man, Finance Minister Joe Ceci, who pretty much taxed everything else Premier Notley didn't with the carbon tax (see top of naughty list) — but then made taxpayers sign a "mystery $233 cheque" for hosting expenses the CTF says he can't explain.

The ASBA's expenses got a mention, as did Wildrose MLA Angela Pitt — expensing a $115 designated drivers ride. Though the CTF appreciates the safety, they say, "taxpayers shouldn't be charged for a fun night out."

And for the final three spots on the naughty list we have:

Former Premier Jim Prentice, for sticking Alberta taxpayers with a $275,000 tab for a byelection, the former PC government paving the way for the NDP to eliminate the single-rate income tax.

And finally, the CTF says, the Calgary Flames owners "having the audacity to ask cash-strapped Calgary taxpayers to bear the financial risk of funding a pro sports complex" is a no-no. "The Flames owners can deck the halls on their own dime," the group said.

METRO

Alberta Finance Minister Joe Ceci, left, and Premier Rachel Notley place 1 and 2 on the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's naughty list this year. THE CANADIAN PRESS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Report released on assisted dying

The practice of physician-assisted dying should be publicly funded by Canadian provinces, available to adults of any age, and not put doctors at risk of criminal prosecution, an expert advisory panel said Monday.

The recommendations were among 43 in the final report from the Provincial-Territorial Expert Advisory Group, which was formed with input from 10 of the country's 13 provinces and territories.

The proposed guidelines found instant favour among advocates, who praised the panel for navigating a quagmire of competing policy concerns without losing sight of patients' needs.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

HEALTH

Sick boy will not get costly drug coverage

A New Brunswick mother says she's devastated after the provincial government rejected her request to fund an expensive drug treatment for her seriously ill son.

Morgan Doucet is 10 and has a rare blood condition called morquio syndrome that stunts growth and causes multiple health problems, including heart and airway disease.

There is no cure, but in 2014 Health Canada approved a new drug to treat the condition called Vimizim.

Last year, Doucet's doctor asked the province to pay for the treatment, which can cost about $200,000 a year. But in November his mother, Carolle Mazerolle, got word the province had turned them down.

"I cried," said Mazerolle in a phone interview from her home in the small community of Baie-Sainte-Anne.

"I find that terrible. I have a sick child. They have a treatment there that could help him, and they won't give it to me."

Mazerolle said her son's condition has already deteriorated since they made the request of the province. "The more I'm waiting, the worse he's getting," she said.

Morgan Doucet struggles with a rare blood disease.
CONTRIBUTED

A spokesman for the New Brunswick Department of Health would not discuss Doucet, citing privacy concerns. But in an email, Bruce Macfarlane noted that the national advisory body that recommends whether drugs should be covered determined that Vimizim should not be.

Patients can apply to have the New Brunswick government cover treatment not listed in the drug plan, but such cases are referred to experts in Ontario for review. In Doucet's case, the expert rejected the request, saying that Doucet had symptoms that were "extremely unlikely" to be alleviated by Vimizim. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

QUEBEC NO CHARGES IN 2014 BLAZE No criminal charges will be laid in the fire that killed 32 people at a seniors' residence in Quebec nearly two years ago, the Crown announced Monday. "In light of the expert and witness testimony that was heard and the evidence gathered by investigators, the DPCP (the Crown) is not able to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a criminal act was ever committed," prosecutor Annie Landreville said.

FRANCES DROUIN/ THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mom tells girl's trafficking story

PROSTITUTION

'Boyfriend pimp' took her daughter away

Hindy Pennock would drive around in circles until the early hours of the morning looking for her 13-year-old daughter. That's how it started.

Then she noticed a change in her daughter's underwear, from normal little girl pants to lacy, lower-cut undies.

"We taught our daughter not to get into cars with strangers, but we did not prepare her for a good-looking guy to walk into her life and traffic her. We never knew about 'boyfriend' pimps," she said.

Hindy Pennock was a stay-at-home mom. Her husband, Ray, was a businessman. They lived in a nice neighbourhood in Winnipeg with their two daughters. Then, they lost one.

For 12 years, Pennock's daughter Jessica was trapped, trafficked from Winnipeg to Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver, forced to have sex for money.

When she first ran away from home, she was gone only a weekend. Then she was gone for a few weeks, then months.

She would always call home, but only for 30 seconds at a time, enough to say, "I love you, Mommy. I'll be home sometime." Enough for Pennock to know her daughter was, at least, alive.

When Pennock looks back today, she can identify some of the warning signs she missed all those years ago. She has taken the difficult step of publicly sharing her story to help others.

"We never thought in a million years that this could happen to her. Never, ever," she said.

The Pennock family changed provinces when Jessica was 10 and she was "horrifically" bullied by her new classmates. "We saw this bright, self-reliant little girl disappear. She just started to vanish," Pennock said.

To help her daughter try to make friends, Pennock drove Jessica to a recreation centre to play basketball on Friday nights. There, she met a boy who gave her crack cocaine, but said it was just like marijuana.

Soon she was addicted.

She started to lie and run away. At 15, she told her parents she was moving in with her new boyfriend, but she never let them meet him.

Some days she would come home with her nails painted or her hair done; other days she would come home "beaten black and blue" with boot marks all over her body. Jessica was silent when her parents asked what was going on.

Her mother said they went to the police, to psychiatrists, teachers and doctors, but no one could help.

"Just let her know that you love her and one day she'll come home," Pennock was told.

Often the only place parents can seek help from is advocacy organizations that work with victims and understand the power dynamic at between pimps and girls.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

WATCH FOR:

1. Hiding the identity of boyfriends or new friends.
2. Lingerie crumpled up and stashed under the bed.
3. Business cards from strip clubs or escort agencies.
4. New clothing appearing in the wardrobe.
5. Becoming possessive of computers or cellphones.
6. Wallets or handbags filled with cash.

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Trump's words hurt kids

UNITED STATES

Young minds suffer from Islamophobic sentiment

A backlash against American Muslims is leaving a mark on some of the nation's youngest minds.

After seeing U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump call on television for barring Muslims from entering the country, Sofia Yassini, 8, checked the locks on her family's home in Plano, Texas, imagining the army would take them away. She raced to her room and stuffed a pair of Barbie dolls, a tub of peanut butter and a toothbrush into a bag. She insisted on bringing boots for the long boat ride she imagined was coming.

When her mother, Melissa, arrived home from her work as a human resources manager, Sofia ran into her arms and cried.

"I want people to understand the impact that their words have on these children," said Melissa Yassini, who described the experience in a Facebook post that had been shared more than 21,000 times as of Monday. "We often forget, we're waging war on one another with words, and we're adults. We can take it. The kids are suffering with this. They go to school every day and they're afraid to tell people they're Muslim. This has to stop."

Anti-Muslim sentiment was building in the days before 14 people were killed Dec. 2 in the massacre at a disability centre in Southern California by a Muslim couple investigators say were inspired at least in part by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group. Experts say Trump's call Dec. 7 to keep all Muslims from entering the U.S. — a plan he said would apply only temporarily and to non-citizens — only fanned the flames.

Muslim parents say their children hear disparaging remarks in their own communities, see hateful bumper stickers and T-shirts, and have had friends abandon them.

Ahad Khan, 12, came home from school in rural Westminster, Md., in tears because his best friend called him a future terrorist, according to Ahad's father, Raza Khan.

Khan, the chairman of the science department at Carroll Community College, shared Ahad's experience in an open letter to Trump on Facebook. As of Monday, it had been shared more than 4,300 times.

As Khan tucked his son in last week, he left him with the words he recited when he became a U.S. citizen two decades ago: "One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

"I don't know why, I don't know how people forget that," Khan said. "We have to; otherwise we're dividing ourselves."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Line from U.S. Pledge of Allegiance, recited by Ahad Khan to his son Raza Khan last week

Sofia Yassini, 8, receives a hug from her mother Melissa Yassini in Richardson, Texas. Parents say U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump's comments are causing confusion for many children. LM OTERO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Cosby countersues women who sued him

Bill Cosby fired back Monday at seven women suing him for defamation.

In a countersuit, Cosby alleges the women made "malicious, opportunistic, and false and defamatory accusations." against him. Cosby is seeking monetary damages "to the maximum extent permitted by law." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Firefighter falls to death down elevator shaft

Chicago firefighter Daniel Capuano, 42, died Monday after falling two storeys down an elevator shaft while fighting a warehouse blaze on the city's South Side.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Police officer acquitted

Cmdr. Glenn Evans, a Chicago police commander accused of shoving his gun down a suspect's throat and pressing a stun gun to the man's groin was acquitted on battery and misconduct charges Monday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIDDLE EAST

Syrian troops seize rebel stronghold

Syrian troops and allied militiamen seized control of a sprawling military airbase near Damascus on Monday, bolstering the government's presence in a key area overwhelmingly controlled by opposition forces.

The Marj al-Sultan airbase lies in the eastern suburb of Damascus known as Eastern Ghouta, and had been held by rebels for the past three years.

The capture is a rare victory for the government in an area considered an opposition stronghold. It bolsters the government's hold over Damascus International Airport.

Fighting on the ground in Syria has intensified even as the international community makes its most serious push yet to restart peace talks between President Bashar Assad's government and the rebels.

On Monday, a visiting UN official said the situation is "a blot on our collective conscience."

Humanitarian chief Stephen O'Brien said he was "deeply saddened" by the uptick in violence.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EXTREMISM

Teacher in France falsifies attack story

A preschool teacher who claimed to have been attacked by a masked assailant invoking ISIL made up the story, French prosecutors said Monday.

The story set off a manhunt in northern Paris.

Both the Paris prosecutor's office and the local prosecutor said the teacher was being questioned Monday afternoon.

The false report comes as France remains under a state of emergency after the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris that left 130 people dead and hundreds wounded. A few weeks later, ISIL urged its followers to attack teachers in France

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EU sets up subsidy to shelter migrants

REFUGEES

Greece to house 20,000 migrants with 80M euros

The European Union pledged Monday to spend 80 million euros ($88 million US) to house migrants in Greece even as it seeks tougher procedures for asylum-seekers travelling to the continent.

Kristalina Georgieva, the EU Commissioner for Budget and Human resources, signed an agreement for a rent subsidy program for up to 20,000 people next year.

Thousands of stranded refugees are currently being housed in old venues from the 2004 Olympics, at camps on Greek islands, or are sleeping in tents pitched in city squares and parks in Athens.

"The 80 million euros is for the year 2016 ... after that it would be assessed. It could be expanded," Georgieva told The Associated Press. "The number involved over the year would be quite a lot higher than 20,000."

Nearly 800,000 migrants and refugees have crossed through Greece this year, hoping to travel to northern Europe. But Macedonia and other Balkan countries last month toughened their border rules, restricting crossings to those from war-torn nations like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan and stranding others.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE EU SUBSIDY

Will pay for hotel vouchers and rent for migrants to live in vacant apartments. More than 20,000 migrants may be sheltered.

A man holds a baby after their arrival from Turkey on the Greek island of Lesbos, on Saturday. The European Union signed an agreement on Monday for a rent subsidy program for up to 20,000 people next year. SANTI PALACIOS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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IN BRIEF

Big banks partnering with financial tech rivals

Financial technology startups are partnering with the very banks the so-called fintech companies had set out to upheave. CIBC has waded into online lending through Montreal-based upstart Thinking Capital, Scotiabank has invested in Kabbage, a U.S.-based lender, and Royal Bank CEO Dave McKay has noted the importance of collaborating with early stage companies. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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INVESTIGATION

Major retailers sell slave-peeled shrimp

Poor migrant workers and children are being sold to factories in Thailand and forced to peel shrimp that ends up in global supply chains, including those of Walmart and Red Lobster, an investigation has found.

At the Gig Peeling Factory, nearly 100 Burmese labourers were trapped, most working for almost nothing. They spent 16 hours a day with their hands in ice water, ripping the guts, heads, tails and shells off shrimp. "They didn't let us rest," said Eae Hpaw, 16, her arms a patchwork of scars from shrimp-related infections and allergies. "We stopped working around 7 in the evening. We would take a shower and sleep. Then we would start again around 3 in the morning."

Pervasive human trafficking has helped turn Thailand into one of the world's biggest shrimp providers. Despite repeated promises by businesses and government, abuses persist, fuelled by corruption and complicity among authorities.

Hundreds of shrimp-peeling sheds are hidden in plain sight in Samut Sakhon, an hour outside Bangkok, some with slaves locked inside. Last month, Associated Press journalists followed and filmed trucks loaded with freshly peeled shrimp from the Gig shed to major Thai exporting companies.

U.S. customs records show the shrimp made its way into the supply chains of major U.S. food stores and retailers such as Walmart, Kroger, Whole Foods, Dollar General and Petco, along with restaurants such as Red Lobster and Olive Garden. It also entered supply chains for some well-known seafood brands and pet foods, including Chicken of the Sea and Fancy Feast.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Win Win Than, 25, who worked in a shrimp shed in Samut Sakhon, Thailand, to pay off her $550 US debt. She said she tried to run away but was caught and handcuffed in a room. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taxi industry hits back with new app

RIDESHARING

Unlike Uber, The Ride tacks on service provider's fees

Canada's taxi industry has a new tool in its fight against the rise of Uber.

The Ride, a new app launched on Monday, works similarly to Uber by offering passengers a more tech-savvy way to connect with local taxi-cab companies.

Like Uber, users must open a personal profile and then use the cellphone's GPS location feature before they hail a cab through the virtual service.

Unlike Uber, The Ride comes with extra fees through your wireless provider.

The app will charge a fixed $2 "convenience fee" for hailing a nearby taxi.

In smaller towns, where local cab companies may not support the app yet, The Ride will charge $1 to connect the passenger to a local dispatch centre over the phone.

Toronto-based CellWand Communications created The Ride. CellWand is the company behind #TAXI, a voice phone service that connects customers to a local cab company for a service fee.

CellWand's new app also provides real-time public transit schedules for 75 cities and communities across the country, with plans to roll out data on bike-sharing services next year.

Taxi-cab operators have been clashing with Uber, urging local governments in some cities to ban the service over various concerns, such as proper licensing and insurance.

Toronto cab drivers staged a protest last week to back their call for local bylaws that would clamp down on UberX drivers.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

A police officer rides his bike between a row of cabs blocking the street during a recent taxi drivers day of protest against Uber in Toronto. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

$1.2B

The amount Canadians spent on taxis last year, according to a report from the Competition Bureau. The agency also found Uber prices were about 36 per cent lower than a comparable cab fare.

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metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Tuesday, December 15, 2015

YANN MARTEL: DEAR SANTA, PLEASE GIFT-WRAP THE EARTH

Father Christmas, please take this bruised and battered world, wrap it in paper, and return it so that we might open it up with the same wonder and delight that children show when they open the gifts you bring them.

Letters Live, an annual celebration of the power of written correspondence held in London since 2013, was launched this year with letters to Father Christmas by such celebrities as Benedict Cumberbatch and Russell Brand. Canadian author Yann Martel also put pen to paper in a heartfelt plea to Santa.

Dear Father Christmas,

I feel impelled to write to you this year, such is the state of the world. The crisis in Syria, with its bountiful bloodshed and endless flow of refugees, the psychotic insanity of ISIL, the climate, which keeps changing for the worse while we only pretend to change our carbon-fuel-devouring ways — to name just a handful of crises that make me shake my head and drop it in my hands — what is one to do but appeal to a greater force? And you are a greater force, are you not? You still manage to make people smile, if only briefly. Is it the bringing together of families, some of whom are genuinely glad to see each other again? Is it the music, those lovely hymns that pull at our hearts? Is it the scenes around Christmas trees that remind us of our younger, happier selves? Is it the gift-giving which, however commodified, still involves giving with the aim to please? Is it the focus on a meal that is meant not to be rushed but enjoyed in and of itself? Whatever it is, you still have an effect, don't you? Children still turn to you with glee, and grown-ups follow them, even if they pretend they don't want to.

Could you double your output? On one extra day, could you come down from your snowy realm and spread good cheer to all?

ISTOCK

I appeal to you. Father Christmas, please take this bruised and battered world, wrap it in gift-wrap paper, and return it to us so that we might open it up with the same sense of wonder and delight that children show when they open the gifts you bring them. Make this world once again the beautiful, marvellous present that it is.

I hesitate. As far as I know, no lasting cessation of hostilities, no reconciliation has ever come about as a result of your intervention. No group — neither the United Nations nor any country nor any religious or political group — has ever asked you to be a mediator or a negotiator. You are jolly and friendly and very generous, but somehow you are left to yourself in your arctic kingdom. How foolish of me then to ask world peace of you. I'm asking too much. You are as impotent as the other great talkers of peace and love, the Jesuses and Muhammads and Krishnas and Buddhas of this world who talk love while their fervent disciples wage war and terror.

But perhaps the problem is that they ask so much of us. Jesus and Muhammad and Krishna and Buddha are demanding moral patrons. It takes a clear mind and a steady heart to follow them sensibly day in and day out. You, on the other hand, of the 365 and one-quarter days of the year, you work to have an effect on only a single day. Of course, that single day takes much preparation on your part, much like writing even the shortest poem demands much work. But still, one divided by 365.25: That's only a 0.27 per cent positive output. On one day, December 25, you are a busy man whose simple aim is to spread good cheer. And you do that job well.

So I ask this of you, only this, Father Christmas, please could you double your output? On one extra day (in summer perhaps — we do tire of winter), could you come down from your snowy realm and spread good cheer to all? Make it so that on one additional day of the year we make a Christmas-like effort to be lovingly kind to all and everyone.

World peace on two days of the year — is that too much to ask? I hope it isn't.

Yours humbly,
Yann Martel

Yann Martel is a Canadian novelist and short-story writer. He is the author of 2001's Life of Pi, which won the Man Booker Prize. He lives and writes in Saskatoon.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

metroview

Make peace with holiday chaos and savour the season

I met a friend for coffee, and neither of us had words for how we're doing.

"Blaahh!" she said with her hands flailing in the air.

It had taken us an extended series of emails to finally pick a time and place to meet — we're each busy, our brains full, at this time of year. She has better reasons: kids, the culmination of a few major projects, the anticipation of a few more. But even I — who normally have ample time for Gilmore Girls reruns — have been packing my days with holiday get-togethers tight as a bulging suitcase.

My sense of calm is out the window, and it's wonderful.

The drink date with a few friends where I meet someone new, funny and charmingly opinionated.

The dinner date where we decided to attend one random event a week in 2016 and call it The Outing (Salsa! Pottery! An academic lecture of the esoteric kind!).

The lunch with my aunt and uncle where politics stayed off the table and we bonded over old stories of my grandmother, which expand in the retelling.

The brunch/skate/The Power Plant gallery trip where we ate slowly, slid on ice as the lake water rippled by and found ourselves in a beautiful, yet repellent, infestation of black paper butterflies.

It doesn't take much to see the precious side.

The drunken debate over communism at the pub. The "once a year whether you need it or not" lunch with an old family friend and his joke-ready compatriots. The cosy, classic dinner at my home away from home.

And the other morning's coffee date, which left me excited about everything, and convinced of all things hopeful, most especially the joy of new friends.

In a city where I can go months without seeing some people, this time of year is a whirlwind of love, a helter-skelter romp through relationships, a fast-track reminder of how lucky I am, how rich in kind people.

This is the Christmas feeling. Of time well spent. Each little visit its own small gift. Its own chance to be smitten, and to feel good about who you are, and where you are, and who you know. That can be an elusive sense much of the year, when you're just trying to get by, and get something done, while the world seems held up by intractable wars, unfathomable suffering and impending doom of one kind or another.

Perhaps it is, but it is not only.

And as it turns out, it doesn't take much, or long, to see the precious side.

Just a cup of coffee.

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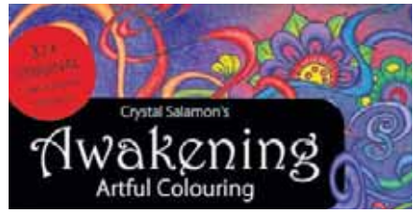
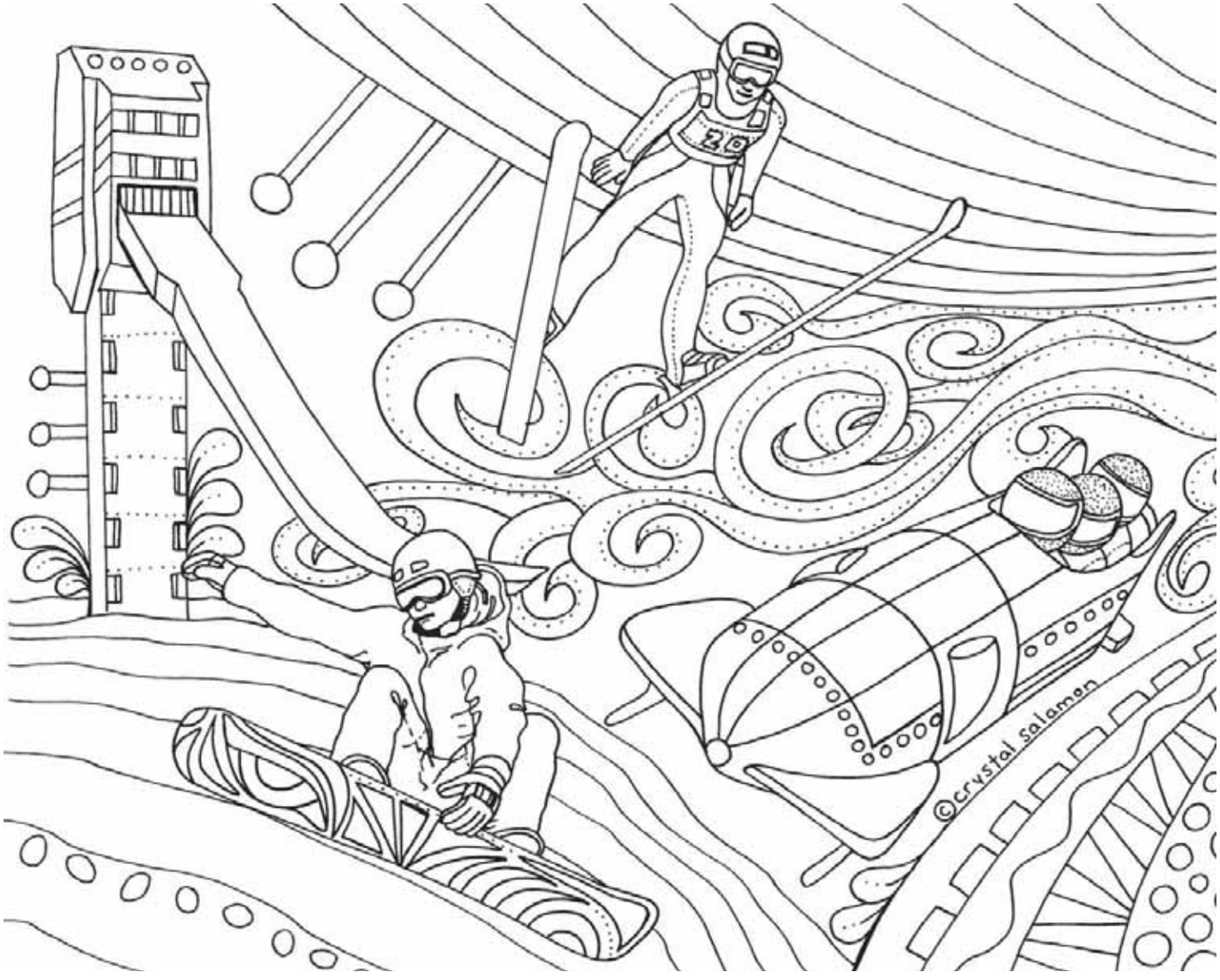


It's time to sharpen your pencil crayons, Calgary. Each week until the end of the year, Metro Calgary, and partners Nikon and the Camera Store, give you a chance to win two seats to the Dec. 31 game between the Flames and Kings. This week's contest closes Monday, Dec. 21 at noon. ILLUSTRATION COURTESY CRYSTAL SALAMON/FOR METRO



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Crystal Salamon

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THE RULES

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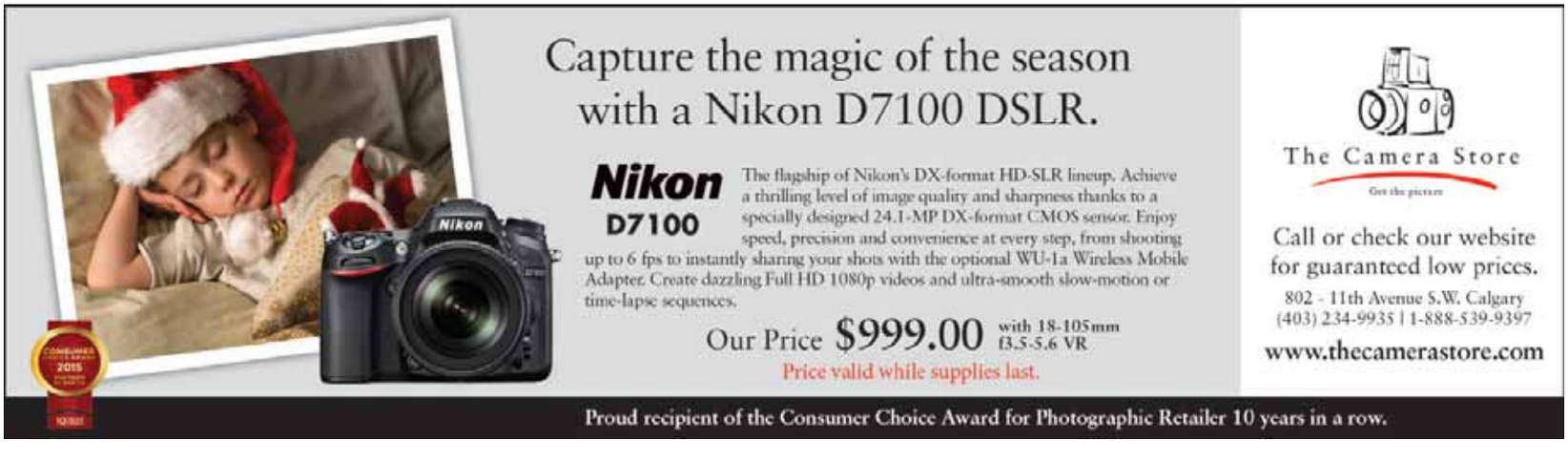
Approx. retail value of the grand prize is $400. Full contest closes Dec. 20, 2015, at 11:59 p.m.

For complete contest rules, visit clubmetro.com/Calgary.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metro LIFE
Your essential daily news
Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Fans get chance to say Hello to Adele
Singer to embark on 56-night North American tour in 2016 with stops in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

Period pieces are trending

APPS

Women's health goes high-tech

In the tech world, women's health is at the forefront — with hundreds of apps focusing on everything from getting pregnant to detecting breast cancer. Lots of other high-tech products in the works too, from Bluetooth-connected menstrual cups to high-tech pill cases that send an alert to your phone if you skip your birth control.

Not surprisingly, women around the world are embracing it all.

Travel writer Natalie Preddie Zamojc, 30, and her husband Mark are trying to have a baby, and Zamojc is using a popular period tracking app — aptly named Period Tracker — to see when she's most fertile. It gives her a sense of control over a process that's often based on luck, she says.

"Now, it'll send me a message being like, "You've ovulating!" and then it's go, go, go," Zamojc says with a laugh.

As the New York Times reported earlier this year, two period tracking apps alone — GP International's Period Tracker, the app Zamojc swears by, and Abishkking's Period Calendar/Tracker — have been downloaded more than 10 million times from the Android store, based on data from the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics.

Pillsy, an app coupled with a unique pouch, helps women keep on top of taking their birth control. COLE BURSTON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Recently, thousands backed a Kickstarter campaign for the Looncup, raising over $160,000 for the silicone cup that sends fluid volume updates to your phone or Apple Watch through a sensor.

And, according to a 2014 TechCrunch report, women's health apps raised more money in the previous year "than all other health-focused apps combined."

It's a big business — and one that's empowering for women, says Toronto-based sexual health educator Lyba Spring. "Anything that gives a woman more control over her reproductive health and her fertility… is a good thing," she says. Certain aspects of women's health should involve a family doctor, Spring adds — like understanding the changes in cervical mucus, for instance — but for basic health and fertility issues, apps are definitely useful, she says.

Jennifer Aldoretta, CEO of Groove, an American company whose app of the same name helps women track their cycles, was born out of its founder's own lengthy reproductive health struggles

"My period brought with it horrible cramps," Aldoretta recalls. "I would vomit from the pain."

Aldoretta started doing her own research on reproductive health and hormones, which led her to develop the Groove app, which she now uses to manage her painful cramps without having to take the pill.

The app, which launched for the iPhone in 2014, allows her to track certain physiological changes that occur throughout your menstrual cycle — such as basal body temperature and cervical fluid secretion — which are both influenced by hormone levels, she says.

Apps can definitely be helpful for women, with many offering a "simple, cost-effective way" to prevent, or make possible, a pregnancy, says Dr. Yolanda Kirkham, an obstetrician-gynecologist who works at Women's College Hospital and St. Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto. She's noticed a rise in the number of her patients using period trackers and other apps, she says, and encourages her patients to try them out. Women just need to be smart and research the apps and technology they're using, Kirkham says. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

HEALTH

Birth control reminder
Women on the pill make up nearly half of all unplanned pregnancies. With that in mind, a six-person team of University of Toronto graduate students has been developing Pillsy, a smart pouch and app that knows if someone takes their birth control pill — and reminds them when they don't. "We've had a number of women come to us and say they're anxious and not on the birth control pill, but if they had the Pillsy pouch and app, they'd trust themselves more to go on the birth control pill," says Pillsy CTO Valentin Peretroukhin.

The Looncup sends fluid volume updates to your phone through a sensor.

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Stay healthy this winter

As cold and flu season kicks into high gear, here's what you need to do to get your defenses ready and stay healthy this winter.

First things first — start with a shot of prevention. Vaccination is the number one way to reduce your risk of severe flu symptoms this year. If you want to learn more about the flu shot, ask your Shoppers Drug Mart pharmacist or visit shoppersdrugmart.ca/flushot.

Remember that not all seasonal illnesses are prevented by the flu vaccine. Cold and flu germs are easily spread through contact with contaminated surfaces — anything from door knobs and shopping cart handles to faucets and even items of clothing.

Scrub your hands well with soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds after touching anything that might carry germs. Be sure to have hand sanitizer nearby for when you can't wash.

Lack of sleep may compromise the immune system, so missing out on your zzzz's may make you more vulnerable to colds and flu. Sleep better by avoiding heavy meals or large amounts of liquid before bed. Studies suggest that sticking to a sleep schedule is also important for a good night's sleep.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Studies also show that vitamin D may help boost the immune system.

In winter, those of us in northern climates may be missing out on "the sunshine vitamin," so consider loading up on foods rich in vitamin D like milk and salmon. Enhance your diet with a vitamin D supplement or a multivitamin to help you stay healthy this winter.

Feel better when you're under the weather

Even if you're careful about prevention, you still may come down with a bug this winter. Check with your pharmacist to see which medications may be right for you.

For throat and chest

Robitussin Cough Control Extra Strength with Mucus and Phlegm Relief works to relieve sore throat pain, dry coughs and chest congestion.

For sinuses

Otrivin® Saline Severe Congestion Relief is a powerful, naturally sourced nasal spray that unblocks nasal passages and relieves nasal and sinus congestion. Breathe Right® non-medicated nasal strips instantly open up the nose and are available for both adults and kids. Advil® Cold & Sinus opens airways by shrinking swollen nasal passages, making it easier to breathe.

For kids

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metro SPORTS

Pete Rose's latest application for reinstatement to baseball was rejected by MLB commissioner Rob Manfred

Flames singing new song heading into Music City

NHL

Five quick wins have changed complexion of Calgary's season

The Calgary Flames climbed out of the NHL's basement and back into the playoff picture with a season-high five wins in a row.

They need to transfer the momentum generated at Scotiabank Saddledome to a four-game road trip, starting Tuesday in Nashville against the Predators.

"This is a huge road trip for us, a huge test," left-winger Johnny Gaudreau said Monday.

The Flames (13-14-2) are also in Dallas on Thursday before back-to-back games in St. Louis and Detroit on the weekend. Calgary's Karri Ramo will start in goal in Nashville after sitting out two games with the flu.

Last in the NHL a week ago, the Flames didn't need many wins to get back into the thick of an anemic Pacific Division. At 28 points, Calgary sit two back of the Vancouver Canucks and Arizona Coyotes, who are tied for second in the division.

Those five wins made it nine in a row at home. The Flames now have to do something about their 3-9-2 road record.

"The easiest motivation for an NHL player is look at the standings," Flames head coach Bob Hartley said.

"It's four big games against four excellent hockey clubs so we will need to be at our best. We want to be a playoff team? We have to win those games. We're on a good roll right now, guys are feeling good so it's important we keep playing the same brand of hockey."

Top-line centre Sean Monahan and his winger, Gaudreau, stepped up their production with a combined 10 goals and eight assists in that five-game span.

The slippery, skilled Gaudreau continues to be the star of the league's three-on-three overtime format with his sixth OT point in Saturday's 5-4 win over the New York Rangers. He assisted on T.J. Brodie's winner as the Flames improved to a league-best 7-1 in overtime.

Gaudreau, 22, recently spoke about the increased responsibility he feels in his sophomore NHL season.

"It's my second year and obviously as you play more games and are in the league longer, you're probably relied on a little bit more," he said.

"Me and Monny playing first line, playing a lot of minutes on the offensive we've got to make sure we're coming ready to play every single night. If we're playing that kind of minutes we need to make sure we're producing offensively and playing well defensively as well." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Johnny Gaudreau and Sean Monahan have been catalysts in the Flames' sudden resurgence. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

3.52

Pieces of the Flames' game have come around, but there are still holes. Their goals-against average of 3.52 — it was 3.2 over their five wins — ranks at the bottom of the league. A power play at 11.6 per cent and a penalty kill at 70.9 are also the NHL's worst.

WORLD JUNIORS

There's a Point in Canada's gold-medal plan

Brayden Point was selected to Canada's world junior team despite missing action recently with a shoulder injury.
AARON VINCENT ELKAIM/THE CANADIAN PRESS

It's rare that Brayden Point gets overshadowed.

Head coach Dave Lowry announced that Point was cleared to resume contact drills with Canada's junior team on Sunday, but less than an hour later the Vancouver Canucks gave forward Jake Virtanen permission to join the national roster ahead of the world junior championships.

Virtanen's addition grabbed the headlines, but Point's being cleared to play — after wearing a non-contact yellow jersey throughout selection camp to avoid damage to an injured shoulder — is also big news.

"It takes some time, but it feels good."
Brayden point on returning from an injured shoulder.

"It's exciting," Point told reporters on Sunday. "It's exciting to see what the lines are going to be so I'm looking forward to it."

Both Point and Virtanen were on Canada's gold medal-winning team last year, with Virtanen making the NHL in November while Point returned to the WHL's Moose Jaw Warriors.

Point has continued to develop as a dynamic, playmaking centre and is fifth in the WHL's points race with 18 goals and 25 assists. He played in 19 games before injuring his shoulder in a loss to Prince Albert on Nov. 17.

He hasn't played since then but practised at Canada's selection camp in Toronto before heading to Imatra, Finland, on Monday night for more training and pre-competition exhibition games. THE CANADIAN PRESS

AWARDS

Serena racks up one more 2015 title

Serena Williams is Sports Illustrated's Sportsperson of the Year — the first female athlete honoured on her own by the magazine in more than 30 years.

Williams came within two matches of tennis' first calendar-year Grand Slam since 1988, a bid that ended with a semifinal loss at the U.S. Open.

In all, the 34-year-old American went 53-3 during 2015 with five titles, including at the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon. Williams was No. 1 in the WTA rankings all season.

"She was the most deserving person for the award. She had an amazing year. The way she won her events; the fact that she's done this for so many years at such a high level," said Paul Fichtenbaum, editor of the Sports Illustrated Group.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED/
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CFL

Maas is new Eskimos coach
Jason Maas has taken charge of the Edmonton Eskimos. Maas spent last season as the offensive co-ordinator and quarterbacks coach with the Ottawa Redblacks.

Under his guidance, Henry Burris was the league's leading passer and the CFL's Most Outstanding Player. Ottawa led the league in offensive yards, passing yards and rushing touchdowns.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

RECIPE Slow Cooker Butter Chicken

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

A dreamy version of the traditional Indian dish using healthy coconut oil instead of butter.

Ready in
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 6 hours
Serves 6

Ingredients
- 2 lb chicken thighs or breasts, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 onion, chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tsp minced ginger
- 147 ml tube of tomato paste
- 1 heaping Tbsp curry
- 1 400 ml can coconut milk
- 1/2 cup Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup milk
- 2 Tbsp coconut oil
- Small handful of cilantro for garnish

Directions
1. Put everything in the slow cooker and stir it all around.
2. Close the lid. Set the timer for 6 hours. Don't worry if you need to be away from home for 8 hours or longer — it will be okay.
3. Serve with a big spoonful of jasmine rice and a sprinkling of cilantro.

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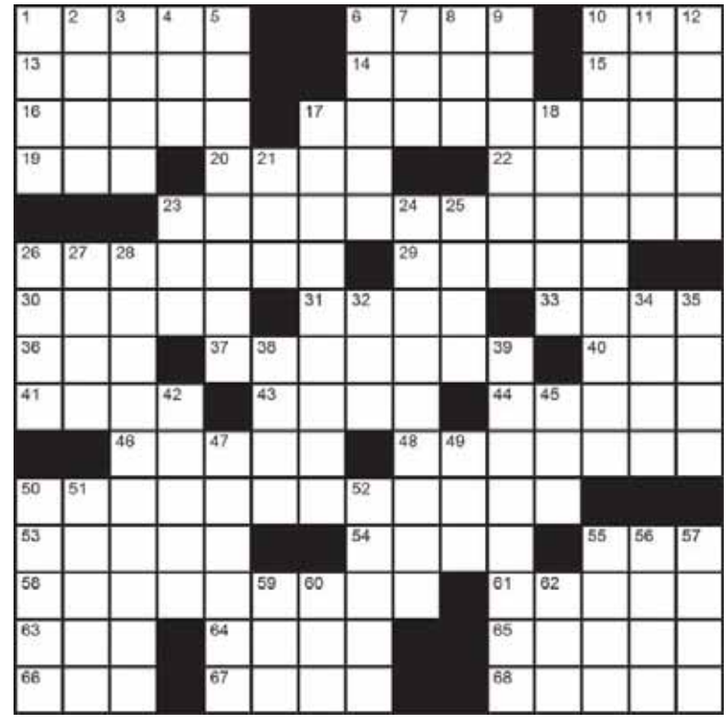
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Cook the broccoli
6. Actor Jared
10. Bar serving
13. Red Hot __ Peppers
14. Architect Mr. Saarinen
15. 'Passion' suffix
16. Paddled
17. Vancouver's province denizen, British __
19. Suit part
20. Intend
22. "Doctor Zhivago" (1965) character
23. Song from Leonard Cohen's 2014 'Popular Problems' album that goes "But I was taken out of Egypt / I was bound to a burden...": 3 wds.
26. Mr. Hall of TV talk
29. Buddy of "The Beverly Hillbillies"
30. __ Ste. Marie, ON
31. Coat the highway
33. Increases twofold, for short
36. Baby dog
37. Cobblers, at times
40. 'King' of France
41. Winter hill ride
43. A __ _ (Record company division)
44. Take away weapons
46. Steal, archaically
48. Canadian comic actor Rick
50. Foothills of The Rockies destination in BC known for dinosaur tracks: 2 wds.
53. Has __ __ (Is able to escape)
54. "Dedicated to the __ _ Love" by The Shirelles
55. "Huh...?"
58. Hockey: Sidney Crosby's nickname: 3 wds.
61. Someone sympathetic
63. Hot season in Montreal
64. Crossed out
65. Stave off
66. Hotdog's li'l topping
67. Off-road rides, commonly
68. Loans

DOWN
1. Glaswegian
2. Popular cuisine
3. Ireland
4. Bitter __
5. 15th or 16th on Salt Lake City's state, variantly
6. A famous Tea
7. Conger, for one
8. __-Paz (Canadian Hip Hop group)
9. Pizazzes
10. Kellogg's cereal with 'Two Scoops!': 2 wds.
11. Someone from calendars
12. Ms. Suvari's
17. Kitchen gadget: 2 wds.
18. Blatted
21. Verdi aria: "__ Tu"
23. Opera singing style, __ canto
24. Leonard Cohen song (from the album at #23-Across) which is the theme tune of the most recent season of HBO's "True Detective"
25. Trucker-to-trucker talker
26. Some slitherers
27. Mr. Julia
28. Linda Evangelista, for one
32. Municipal council member, e.g.
34. Ms. Loughlin
35. A famous Molly
38. Icicle holder
39. __ mask (Operating room necessity)
42. Launch
45. Hebrides 'no'
47. Tennis legend Ms. Gibson
49. Keats specialty
50. Electroshock-er
51. Amalgamate
52. Banned-in-sports substances, slang-style
55. Small songbird
56. Farm group
57. Mr. Linkletter's
59. __. number
60. Mr. Bacon, briefly
62. Street sort, shortly

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
You seem more easy-going and that's good. However, where money is concerned you cannot afford to be too laid-back or you will attract hangers-on and spongers and find yourself out of pocket. Watch your cashflow.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Partnership matters will go smoothly after the upsets and upheavals of recent weeks. You are a lot less competitive, and a lot more relaxed, in one-to-one situations.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Cosmic activity in your opposite sign of Sagittarius will remind you that you cannot always be top dog. If you want to get things done you must be ready to work with others.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Avoid stressful situations, especially if you are the kind of Cancer who gets upset when things go wrong. Nothing can be allowed to put your health at risk.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Raise your sights and show the world what you are capable of. Don't allow yourself to be distracted by trivial things, and don't try to be all things to all people.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Others may complain that nothing is happening but life is what you make of it and you are determined to make something really good. Show all the moaning minnies what a positive attitude can accomplish!

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Do you carry on along your present course or do you change direction and try something different? It might help to talk it over with friends and family. They can see your situation from a less personal perspective.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You need to take your cashflow situation more seriously than you have been. If resources are low then there are only two ways to build them up again: spend less or earn more.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Don't be scared to take a few chances and try your hand at something new. Leave your comfort zone and accomplish something truly worthwhile.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
If you do a good deed today you will be rewarded for it in the future. You would do it anyway even if you knew you would get nothing out of it — that's the kind of person you are!

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
What's coming into your life may seem like something you haven't earned but that's the wrong way to look at it. If you're being favoured it's because you have done something in the past that has helped others.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
Flattery will take you a long way, but hard work will take you further. Cosmic activity in and around the career area of your chart makes it easy to impress with ideas and enthusiasm.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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	5						7	
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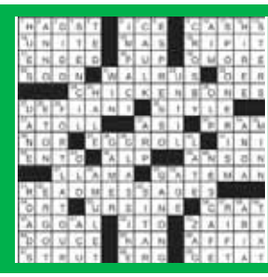

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4	5	7	2	1	3	9	8	6
5	8	3	6	4	9	2	1	7
7	6	9	8	2	1	5	3	4
1	4	2	3	7	5	6	9	8

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